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## Why Socialism?

In the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO Marx and Engels gave credit to capitalism for increasing the forces of production within a narrow time period of some two to three hundred years. However they went on to note that capitalism had become a “*fetter on production*” in that it now restricted technology and co-cooperative social labour to the market and profit.

Consequently, there is now a wide gulf between what can be produced to meet human need and what is produced for sale, profit and the anti-social obsession of capital accumulation. So the pressing question arises why does this gulf between what can be produced and unmet need be bridged? Why does production just not take place to meet human need? What prevents production and distribution being used in this way?

And the problems of unmet need are not hard to find. They are reported in the media on a daily basis. Here are just a few:

- \* Not enough food in the world leading to starvation
- \* Insufficient, poor and substandard housing
- \* Death due to illness, lack of medicine and unsanitary conditions
- \* Illiteracy, lack of education
- \* Pollution and environmental degradation
- \* Millions of people unemployed

The media report these problems but give superficial accounts of why they occur or blame politicians for not having the resolve to pass the right reform or give sufficient resources in resolving them.

What is not questioned is the social system in which we live. Nothing is said about the consequences of commodity production and exchange for profit. The class system with its class relations to the means of production and distribution is a no-go-area. The capitalist class with its wealth and privilege and the exploitive wages system are taken as natural not to be questioned for being smeared as “*the politics of envy*” a “*Socialist or Communist*” or an “*impractical utopian*”.

To understand why there are seemingly entrenched social problems first requires an understanding of capitalism, the limits imposed on production and distribution by capitalism and the political means necessary to overcome the way in which class relations of production and distribution hold back the forces of production including co-operative and social labour from meeting the needs of all society.

The capitalist class own the means of production and distribution. This ownership gives them the advantage to dictate what is produced and for whom even though it conflicts with the needs of the rest of society. And the conduit

through which commodity production under capitalism takes place is the market. If more food or houses are needed then if it is not profitable to produce more food or more houses then they will just not be produced irrespective of unmet need. It is as simple as that.

Here we have a contradiction within capitalism which will not go away; a contradiction immune to social reform. Capitalism has the potential to meet the needs of all society but the interest and priorities of the class of capitalists who own the means of production and distribution means that needs go unmet even if that means starvation or death through ill health. The rule of capitalism is no profit no production.

The cause of the gulf between what could be produced and what is produced is the private ownership of the means of life and class relations between a world minority capitalist class and a world-wide majority working class. Only the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution of all society along with the ambition of class relations – the conscious and political establishment of socialism by a socialist majority – can bridge the gulf between the restrained potential in the forces of production and unmet human need.

The principle of socialism: “*from each according to ability to each according to need*” within the framework of socialist production and distribution will mean direct access to what men and women need to live worthwhile lives and to flourish in an open and democratic society. Rather than artificial scarcity there would be abundance; there would be no wages system, no buying and selling of labour power, no money, no market and no employer.

Socialism is not utopian but a practical alternative to capitalism which currently fails the majority living on this planet.

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# Whose War and whose Terrorism?

## Socialists Do Not Take Sides

The so-called War on Terror in Afghanistan is about to enter its concluding 14th year with a mere 9,800 US troops remaining to act as “*advisors*” to the friable Afghan army and police force. In reality they are an insurance policy, necessary to protect the raw resources and the oil and gas lines in the country and to shore up the new Afghan administration from collapse.

Not that the US will be missed by the Afghan population. A recent US air strike killed 11 civilians, including two children and two women in the Marang district of Kunar (YAHOO NEWS.COM, 10th 09 2014). This act of terror barely received a mention in the Western media. Not that the conflict has come cheap; the US capitalist class has had to pay, to date, some \$753.3 billion in military expenditure including \$3.2 billion in the fiscal year 2014 (nationalpriorities.org 2014)

What the US capitalist class and its Government do enjoy is uncritical support in the media from academics, journalists and the *literati*. Justification for the death and destruction in Afghanistan comes from the crude “*My Country Right or Wrong*” to the sophisticated prose from the likes of the late Christopher Hitchens, Martin Amis and David Aaronovitch; the latter so exhilarated by Blair’s pro-US speech to the 2001 Labour conference that he needed to leave his house “*to get some fresh air*” (CAPITALISM CAUSES WAR AND TERRORISM SPGB page 5 2001).

Socialists are constantly lectured to by supporters of the US that their government is morally superior to the feudal Taliban insurgency and the Caliphate in Syria/Iraq. According to its apologists, the US has “*rationalism*” on its side enshrined in its universal Declaration of Rights as opposed to the crazed irrationality of its opponents. The odd death here and there is to be expected, they say. Do you want either the Taliban or IS to win?

The question implies that capitalism can be split into a moral order of good versus evil. Socialists reject the facile argument that capitalism can be divided-up in such a simplistic way. It shows a scant understanding of history, how

capitalism came into existence, and the historical development of competing nation states which has caused acts of barbarism, death and destruction in the pursuit of raw resources, strategic points of influence and trade routes for over three hundred years.

Socialists give support to no nation State. Instead, socialists want to see a conscious and politically active working class replacing capitalism and its war on terrorism with socialism. What socialists want to see established is a world-wide socialism based on human co-operation with no artificial boundaries across the world. And common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society can only come about when workers - those who have to live off wages and salaries - refuse to get involved in capitalism's conflicts. Workers have to understand politically where their own interests lie. And their interests are totally at odds with those of the capitalist class and its politicians.

## War and the World's Resources

The world's resources are owned by the capitalist class and protected by their respective States. The capitalists own the means of production; the factories, the transport systems and the distribution points to the exclusion of the working class. The capitalist class enjoy their unearned wealth and privilege to the exploitation of the working class by paying workers less in wages and salaries than the wealth they produce in the production process. Consequently, a world capitalist class faces a world working class over the rate and intensity of exploitation. And because the capitalist class own the means of production, protected by the machinery of government; "*all class struggles are political struggles*" (Marx and Engels, COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

Workers should not be seduced by the judgemental rhetoric of politicians who claim they represent "*good*" and their opponents represent "*evil*". Followers of Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Western could be forgiven into believing that George Bush when President, saw himself as Clint Eastwood-"*the man with no name*" -from the film "*The Good, the Bad the Ugly*" but the reality was altogether different. Bush presided over concentration camps, torture, the bombing of women and children and a grab for world's resources like gas and oil. His successor, Barak Obama, a parody of Wilf Smith in the "*Wild Wild West*", has acted no differently, nor could he, ordering the use of unmanned drones to reign down death and destruction on those below. The toll after 5 years of drone strikes ordered by the Obama administration has been 2,400 dead (HUFFINGTON POST 23 1 2014).

The US Government conveniently refuses to judge its own actions of torture and barbarism yet arrogantly sits in judgement on others. The torture of suspected terrorists by the previous Bush administration (some of which took place in Poland with its concentration camp attractions for the tourist industry) was conceded by President Obama with the words "*We tortured some folks*" but then he shrugged his shoulders and moved on citing as an excuse the "*stress and fear*" of the torturers! (THE GURDIAN 1st August 2014). The US pretends that it is a Texan sheriff wearing a white Stetson hat fighting grizzled desperados the world over and sees its duty to defend free markets and free trade by stopping the bad guys preventing the "*joy of capitalism*" being spread over the six continents of the world. In reality the spread of capitalism has led to economic enslavement, rape and pillage and the extermination of millions of people.

Now Obama has begun air strikes against IS in Iraq and Syria, joined by the French government and the British which included parliamentary support from the Labour Party opposition. The armchair generals – referred to by the late Professor Tony Judt as "*Bush's Useful Idiots*" (LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS, 21. 09. 2006), safe in front of the television screen as the baddies are zapped as though it were some teenager's computer game, are already writing their copy of support for the guided missiles fired on anything and anyone flying the Black Flag while denouncing anyone who dares criticise the actions of the US led alliance about to bring IS to its knees.

## International Rivalry and War

Every State is locked in conflict with every other State and friends become enemies and enemies become friends over night. Iran, once a deadly enemy of the US is now being courted through British intervention into the grand alliance against IS, but not, for the moment President Assad in Syria. Nevertheless Assad will benefit from the US

and its allies degrading or destroying IS in northern Syria even though in 2013 he was the “*enemy of choice*” for the US and its allies.

Socialists do not take sides. We say a plague on both your houses. We no more support the Taliban zealots in Afghanistan and IS in Syria and Iraq with their irrational Islamic beliefs of a dystopian Caliphate than we support the interests of the US and its allies whose so-called War on Terror is a smoke screen to protect strategic points of influence, raw resources and trade routes.

Socialists make no moral judgement except to point out that capitalism is a very unpleasant system of international conflict and class exploitation. We reject that there are “*just*” and “*unjust*” wars. Wars are not a by-product of ethics. Governments do not go to war because it is either just or unjust. Governments justify war in moral and nationalistic terms in order to gain public support, by claiming they are just. Governments have to convince public opinion the war is for “*Freedom*”, *democracy* and “*human rights*”. However, there is not a shred of evidence that wars in capitalism have ever been fought for these reasons. The answer is crude and base. Wars arise out of capitalism being divided into competing nation States; a struggle over raw resources, trade routes and spheres of influence.

Governments will not say that war is being fought for oil, to protect gas supplies and to ensure a region remains stable as a strategic sphere of influence. But that is exactly what wars under capitalism are fought for. If there were carrots being grown in Iraq instead of oil wells would the US government be wasting billions of dollars degrading and exterminating IS? We have been told by defenders of the War on Terror that we have to take sides against radical Islam and terrorist groups like al Qaeda and IS. Would we want to live in a world dominated by Islamic Fundamentalism and an obscurantist Caliphate? Do we want theocracies to rule our lives? This is not a new argument put to Socialists.

At the outbreak of the Second World War socialists were told that it was better living in Britain than in a dictatorship; easier to put the socialist case in 1940’s Britain than Hitler’s Germany. Socialists pointed out that wherever socialists exist they will try to put the socialist case as best they can. It is never easy. In some parts of the world it is harder and more dangerous than others.

But what do the apologists of Western capitalism want us to do? Suspend the socialist case while one group of capitalists and their governments, with the support of its working class, kill other members of the working class? We advocate socialism as the means to stop war not the absurd proposition that if all the countries of the world ceded their interests to the US or some other super power then there would be universal peace. It is sheer utopianism, like the belief held by proponents of free trade that the more economically liberal capitalism becomes in the world the less likely there will be war.

Between 1914 and 1918, war was no bed of roses for socialists with restrictions placed on what socialists could say about the conflict in Europe. Socialists were forced to go on the run, endure economic hardship while others were forced into conscription. It was not as hard for socialists in the Second World War but they still had to endure enforced conscription, imprisonment and the difficulties imposed on putting a socialist case against war restrictions (R. Barltrop THE MONUMENT Ch. 6 and Ch. 11, 1975).

The German Social Democratic Party was faced with years of difficulty for political organisation under Bismarck’s Anti-Socialist Laws with many members imprisoned. They carried on as best they could. Of course it is difficult arguing the case for socialism staring down the barrel of a gun, awaiting a call from the secret police, enduring torture and possible death. But it is understood by a socialist that all the exploitation, pain and misery faced by the working class, which includes socialists is not the actions of government in power *per se* but the fact that the capitalist class own and monopolise the means of production and are divided into competing nation States.

It is because the working class continue to give support to capitalism by voting for its politicians that war, terrorism death and destruction persists from one generation to the next. And on capitalism as the cause of war and terrorism there is not even a passing comment by our critics.

## **The War of Terror: From Afghanistan to Iraq and Syria**

Throughout the war in Afghanistan, however, there has been little interest -- whether from the US government or other groups - on its toll on the civilian population of Afghanistan. Very few attempts at compiling annual estimates of insurgency-related civilian deaths have been made. The nature of the conflict makes data collection difficult and verification even more so. However, attempts have been made. In 2002 the BBC NEWS was reporting that the number of Afghan civilians killed by US bombs has surpassed the death toll of the 11 September attacks. The BBC cited a study an American academic Professor Marc Herold:

*“Nearly 3,800 Afghans died between 7 October and 7 December, University of New Hampshire Professor Marc Herold said in a research report”*

In 2012, 2,754 Afghans had died in the violence between the US led multi-national invasion force and the Taliban, nearly twice as many as in 2005 and marginally less than in 2011 (GUARDIAN 12 April 2013). And how are they dying? They are dying through the use of missiles from air attacks, from bullets from ground assault, from suicide bombs, from targeted killings and increasingly from cluster bombs. Afghanistan is now littered with unexploded cluster bombs, adding to the risk to civilians who also routinely die from the estimated 10 million land mines that remain from previous wars. Most of the child casualties in Afghanistan were from cluster bombs (childsrnandarmedconflict.un.org).

We state, with Marx, that workers have no country. Our interests are totally separate and opposed to those of the capitalist class. We do not recognise that the Government is neutral but is instead *“the Executive of the bourgeoisie”*. We reject patriotism and nationalism as an anti-socialist poison just as we do all religions. We are not pacifists but we reject capitalist wars as something the working class should not fight or die for. In saying that capitalism is the source of war we do not mean that capitalism’s wars are deliberately plotted for the purpose of making a profit, even though some individuals have done this.

As the SPGB noted nearly sixty years ago:

*“...it would be more accurate to say that Governments, in trying to handle the problems and antagonism created by capitalism, turn to war when other means fail”* (THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR p. 27 1950).

This includes the so-called War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq as it equally does for the conflict in Iraq and Syria against the terrorism of IS.

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# The Other 9/11

## The Other 9/11

Each and every September the US government remembers what it calls “9/11” when the twin towers in New York were destroyed by terrorists with the loss of nearly 3000 lives. The President of the United States gives a speech at “Ground Zero” extolling the “values” of “US democracy and liberty” over its enemies as though the destruction of the buildings was an inexplicable event that came out of a clear blue sky.

As for those who went to the rescue of the dead and the dying at “Ground Zero”, latest figures show more than 2,500 police officers, firefighters, ambulance staff and sanitation workers reported they had cancer in 2013 – twice as many as said they had the disease 12 months earlier (DAILY TELEGRAPH 27. 7.2014).

The dust from the building debris contained cancer causing chemicals and asbestos. These harmful particles entered the lungs of those at or near the Twin Towers when they collapsed with catastrophic consequences. Just like civilians in Vietnam who are still being killed by unexploded bombs long after the US military left in 1973, so the total deaths from 9/11 will continue to rise over the next decade as more workers succumb to cancer and asbestosis (HUFFINGTON POST 08.03.13).

However, this is not the only 9/11 anniversary to be remembered. There is an earlier 9/11 almost forgotten except for those who had to live through its violent history. The other 9/11 cost the lives of more people at the time than the events in New York some thirty years later; and it is conveniently forgotten for a very good reason.

On 11th September 1973, President Salvador Allende, who had been elected on just 36 per cent of the vote, was overthrown by a military coup assisted by the CIA and funded by the US government. President Nixon informed the CIA that an Allende government in Chile would not be acceptable and authorized \$10 million to stop Allende from coming to power or unseat him ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador\\_Allende](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador_Allende) ).

Allende's government took power on the basis of a state capitalist not a socialist platform. The political programme called for the break-up the big landed estates, for the nationalisation of foreign-owned businesses and some Chilean-owned industry, and for the implementation of various social reforms.

Nevertheless its political programme was seen by the Nixon administration as a threat to US interests in the region. The fact that President Allende had been democratically elected, albeit by a minority of the vote, appeared to count for nothing. He had to go, even though this meant the clandestine machinations of political intrigue leading to a violent military coup and the imposition of a ruthless dictatorship.

In fact, if the US government had waited long enough the Allende government would have either fallen into unpopularity and been kicked out of office or become a dictatorship in its own right to cover up its inability to deliver its popular reform programme which had initially attracted so many votes.

Politicians who try to administer capitalism in the interests of all society eventually fail to meet the promises they initially gave. All capitalist politics ends in failure except for the continuation of the profit system and the life of privilege and comfort of the ruling class.

The working class in Chile would still have remained exploited propertyless wage and salary earners even if Allende's political programme had been successfully implemented. At some stage in Allende's regime workers would have come into conflict with employers and their state over the extent and intensity of class exploitation. Surplus value has to be constantly extracted out from the working class for capital to accumulate and expand. That is the reality of capitalism the world over and applies equally to Chile as to any other capitalist country.

Capitalism can only ever be administered in favour of a minority capitalist class living off the unearned income of rent, interest and profit no matter what reforms are enacted and who has been elected into political power. Private or state capitalism and free market or regulated capitalism offer no solution to the problems facing the working class; only the establishment of socialism will ensure production and distribution will take place just to meet human need.

Allende had no socialist mandate from a non-socialist working class to establish socialism. In fact he did not have a majority to control parliament and the armed forces and was therefore always vulnerable to a coup. However, he had been elected by a limited political democracy, but when it comes to furthering its interests abroad the US is as interested in "*democracy*" as Russia was when it seized the Crimea in early 2014.

The military coup in Chile was a temporary backward step because it restricted the working class to freely, organise, discuss and spread socialist ideas but the Allende option was no option at all for the working class to support. The coup in Chile also led to 3200 deaths many from torture while 200,000 were forced into political exile. On a recent trip to Chile, President Obama found nothing to apologise for. He just could not care less. Quite frankly he couldn't give a damn.

Socialists did not support the Unity Popular government of Salvador Allende any more than we supported the subsequent political opposition to the Chilean military junta under Augusto Pinochet, arguing instead that the working class support for capitalist politicians does not bring socialism any nearer. Only the clear and distinct movement towards the formation of a socialist majority necessary to end capitalism can open up the way to establish socialism.



Workers have to think and act for themselves no matter how hard the temporary political conditions may be. The interest of the working class must be kept separate from those calling for “*freedom and democracy*”. Despite the military junta being replaced in 1990, Chile is as far away today from becoming socialist as is any other capitalist country.

Unfortunately, the working class in Chile, as is the case with workers elsewhere in the world, still vote for political leaders at elections. Political leaders, however benign and sincere cannot establish socialism nor can socialism be imposed upon a non-socialist working class. Only the conscious and political action of a socialist majority working democratically through a principled socialist party can establish socialism.

## SOCIALISM IS POSSIBLE

*It was Engels who remarked that a revolutionary period exists when people begin to realise that what they once thought was impossible can in fact be done. When people realise that it possible to have a world without frontiers, without wages and profits, without employers and the armed forces, then a socialist revolution will not be that far away. Socialist Party of Great Britain, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, p 65 1976*

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# A Socialist message to Trade Unions

The Socialist Party of Great Britain, from our inception in 1904, has had many members who have held office and played an active part in Trade unions. We recognise the importance of Trade Unions in the class struggle against employers. Trade Unions can successfully bargain wage and salary increases when trade conditions allow and endeavour to restrict or even halt wage reductions when trade conditions deteriorate.

Trade Unions can also improve the working conditions for their members. They are an essential feature of the capitalist system. In the S.P.G.B.’s study of capitalism we have made a number of important contributions to the role of Trade Unions in the class struggle. We assert that the Trade Unions can only act as a defensive weapon to the exploitation of our class in the productive process of social wealth.

## The Conduct of Strikes, Democracy and Trade Unions

In the use of the strike weapon, workers must recognise that except on rare occasions, any Government will enforce the law, and in the final analysis if a strike threatens the “*national interest*”, that is the interest of the capitalist class, the armed forces will be used to protect the status quo. When employers consider the issue of sufficient importance to warrant all-out resistance, the trade union cannot hope to win – the disastrous strike by the miners in 1984 is a classic example.

In all cases, strike action must be based on a majority decision of the membership and the decision to return to work should likewise be a majority decision. Socialists only support trade union action when it is in the interest of the working class as a whole. We do not support trade union action against another trade union just as we do not support “*British jobs for British workers*”.

## Worker Directors

The danger of “*worker directors*” to the trade union is obvious. In times of “*laying-off*” workers or compulsory redundancies, trade union representatives involved at board meetings have to take decisions that can only lead to division within the trade union. “*Worker directors*” is a contradiction in terms. Directors can only work on behalf of the shareholders and not the workers.

# Trade Unions and Capitalist Political Parties

It is not in the workers' interest that their trade unions should affiliate or support the Labour Party, or any other political party which is committed to administering the capitalist system. They must learn that no matter which party is in power, its weight will be thrown in support of the employers in any struggle, as all past governments have demonstrated.

## Trade unions and the minimum Wage

The S.P.G.B. has pointed out that the minimum wage legislation cannot be enforced and that many workers where the minimum wage is being breached would rather put up with low wages than lose their jobs. The call for a "*living wage*", supported by some business as well as the Tory, Boris Johnson, suffers the same deficiencies and problems of realisation as the minimum wage.

What constitutes a "*living wage*" is just as incoherent as to ask what a "*fair wage*" is. Socialists urge workers to struggle for higher wages through trade union action as and when they can but we counterpoise the political calls for a minimum and a living wage, with a call for the abolition of the system of private ownership of the means of production which gives rise to the exploitation of the wages system.

## Trade Unions and Social Security

Trade unions have supported Family Allowances in the misguided belief that the principle cause of poverty for many workers is the possession of young families. Socialists who found themselves in a trade union which supported this social reform, rigorously fought against its formal adoption as trade union policy. We argue that no scheme for social reform can remove the poverty endured by the working class under capitalism.

Family Allowances were considered by the bosses to be a contribution to workers' wages, and were taken into account when engaged in settling wage claims, on the basis that the children of workers had been partially "*provided for*" by these allowances. And as a social reform, family allowances are, along with other "*benefits*", periodically cut as part of the government's determination to reduce the cost of social welfare in the interest of capitalism.

## Trade Unions and the Labour Party

Workers erroneously believe the Labour Party, despite the failure of all past Labour administrations, can run society in their interests. Great hope was placed in the Blair-Brown government to end unemployment, poverty, insecurity and so on. It was a false hope. Politically, the Labour Party can only run capitalism in the interest of the capitalist class who own and control the means of wealth production and distribution.

The former Labour Party Prime Minister, now an adviser to corrupt dictatorship and tyrants, gave a speech in the United States after shortly coming to power. He told the audience a truth about the Labour Party which the working class and trade unions should remember. He wanted to make the Labour government "*a natural party of business... just as much the party of business as the Conservatives, if not more*" (DAILY TELEGRAPH 24 June 1997).

## Trade Unions, Privatisation and Nationalisation

One of the unmitigated historical mistakes of the trade union movement was to believe they and their members had a stake in nationalisation. No sooner had the mines, railways and other industries been nationalised by the post Second World War Labour Government that workers were forced to strike for higher pay and working conditions.

And so it went on until the Tory privatisation policies of the 1980's. As far as workers and trade unions are concerned there is no difference between being employed by the State and being employed by a private company.



Both forms of capitalism exploit the working class paying them less in wages and salaries than the social wealth the working class actually produce.

Instead of the bogus nationalisation or privatisation debate pursued by trade union leaders and the capitalist Left, the political question should be capitalism or socialism; production for profit or production directly for social need.

## Trade unions and the S.P.G.B.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain entered the political field not to run capitalism but to work for its abolition and its replacement with the common ownership and democratic control of the means of life by all society. Our socialist message to all workers, regardless of race or sex, is laid down in our

## Object and Declaration of Principles.

It is a call to all workers to stop giving support to capitalist politicians like Miliband, Cameron and Clegg. We again assert, Trade Unions can only be defensive organisations.

The answer for the working class is political, not industrial; it is the establishment of socialism where production for needs replaces production for profit, and where we are all freed from the servility of employment, class and the wages system. As Marx once remarked:

*Instead of the conservative motto: A fair day's pay for a fair day's work... (workers) ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchwords... "Abolition of the wages system" (VALUE PRICE AND PROFIT)*

### WHAT IS SURPLUS VALUE?

*The surplus value, or that part of the total value of the commodity in which surplus labour or unpaid labour of the workman is realised, I call Profit. The whole of that profit is not pocketed by the employing capitalist. The monopoly of land enables the landlord to take one part of that surplus value, under the name of rent, whether the land is used for agricultural buildings or railways, or for any other productive purpose. On the other hand, the very fact that the possession of the instruments of labour enables the employing capitalist to produce a surplus value, or, what comes to the same, to appropriate to himself a certain amount of unpaid labour, enables the owner of the means of labour, which he lends wholly or partly to the employing capitalist – enables, in one word, the money-lending capitalist to claim for himself under the name of interest another part of that surplus, so that remains to the employing capitalist as such only what is called industrial or commercial profit.*

*By what laws this division of the total amount of surplus value amongst those three categories of people is regulated, is a question quite foreign to our subject. This much, however, results from what has been stated. Rent, interest, and Industrial Profit are only different names for different parts of the surplus value of the commodity, or the unpaid labour enclosed in it, and they are equally derived from this source, and from this source alone. (Marx, Parts into which Surplus Value are decomposed, VALUE, PRICE AND PROFIT p34 – 35)*

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## Socialists Are Not Patriots

Michael Gove, former Education Secretary of State for Education and now chief disciplinarian to the Tory Party backbenchers, mischievously remarked in a recent discussion on the politics of the First World War that “*socialists are not patriotic enough*” (TIMES 21st July 2014). Lord West, a Labour peer and former admiral, was so upset at this slur that he challenged Mr Gove for a few rounds in the boxing ring. This curious remark also upset a Labour Councillor from Ipswich; one Alasdair Ross who claimed on his blog that he had just attended a ‘*Labour Friends of the Forces*’ reception in London which demonstrated just how patriotic Labour was.

Those at the event in London included most of the shadow defence team and the Party's leader, Ed Miliband. Also there were three potential Parliamentary candidates, all former members of the armed forces. The assembled politicians all wore their patriotism proudly on their chests to reflect the medals of the professional killers being celebrated at the reception after their recent tour of Afghanistan. After several years killing the Taliban "*our boys*" were eager to find out what their "*friends*" in the Labour Party, originally known as the "*Party of Peace*", could do for them.

While there is no doubt Lord West, Mr Ross, Ed Miliband and other Labour Party members are sincerely patriotic to the core, despite the mendacious rumours of DAILY MAIL editorials to the contrary, and while they would lose no sleep in instigating a global war of death and destruction for the interests of "*their country*", they are all under the misguided belief that they are somehow members of a socialist political party who can be just as violently patriotic, perhaps more so, than the Tories.

Well, socialists have news for the likes of Mr Ross *et al*; the Labour Party never has been, is not and never will be socialist. This is not to say that its deluded and misguided membership cannot be socialists. They can. But first they would have to leave this disreputable anti-working class party behind them and begin to understand what socialism means.

And foremost in becoming a socialist requires opposing capitalism's wars and reminding the working class they have no country to kill or die for. Someone cannot be both a socialist and a member of the Labour Party. The circle cannot be squared. In fact the Labour Party has always done its bit when it comes to war. It has supported war when in opposition and engaged in war and conflict when in Government. And given half the chance, Labour Prime Ministers from Atlee to Brown would have had no hesitation in sending secret codes and ciphers to either bomber command or to a submerged nuclear submarine somewhere in the oceans of the world to usher in nuclear Armageddon.

As for Mr Gove, his weasely remarks about socialists and patriotism are wrong. Socialists are in fact anti-patriotic and we cannot be anti-patriotic enough. Socialists are indeed proud to be unpatriotic; we have no nationalist flags to wave; we have no national anthem to sing, we do not smear our faces with paint and chant out inane tribal loyalties to a false abstraction at national sporting events and we do not kill for another class's interest. Instead we extend our class solidarity to our fellow workers no matter whom they are and where they live. We stand in line for no one; we refuse our consent. Socialists have a long history of opposing capitalism's war including Afghanistan. Patriotism is not the last refuge of the scoundrel but of the idiot.

## UNDERSTANDING HISTORY, HISTORICAL EVENTS & PROCESSES

A Socialist understanding and critique of the events that take place in capitalism owe a debt to the invaluable insights provided by Marx and his theory of history, known more popularly as the materialist conception of history, Marx made two important points; they are about five years apart and are both are important to understand. In 1847 Marx remarked that that:

*History does nothing; it does not possess immense riches, it does not fight battles. It is men, real, living, who do all this.... It is not "history" which uses men as a means of achieving—as if it were an individual person—its own ends. History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends* (POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY).

While five years later, in 1852, he added the following important qualification: *Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living* (THE 18TH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE).

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# Lenin and Dadaism in Zurich

## Lenin Did a Lot of Mischief

1916 Zurich was the setting for two revolutionary events; one political the other artistic. At a house in Spiegelgasse, Lenin dreamt of a Russian revolution; he planned insurrection, violence and a grab for power. Within walking distance of Lenin's home, through the small café-lined squares and alleys of the old city, the Dada group of artists and poets set-up the Cabaret Voltaire in which to present a programme of “*anti-art*” as a reaction to the First World War. Both Lenin and the Dadaists, in their own respective way, wanted to change the world but they both failed; and in Lenin's case, made matters worse.

The Bolshevik's failure to secure a socialist revolution, following their coup d'état in October 1917, was commented upon by the Socialist Party of Great Britain. As early as August 1918 an article appeared in the SOCIALIST STANDARD commenting upon the economic underdevelopment of Russia and its unsuitability for the establishment of socialism:

*Is this huge mass of people, numbering about 160,000,000 and spread over eight and a half millions of square miles, ready for Socialism? Are the hunters of the North, the struggling peasant proprietors of the South, the agricultural wage-slaves of the Central Provinces, and the industrial wage-slaves of the towns convinced of the necessity, and equipped of the knowledge requisite, for the social ownership of the means of life? Unless a mental revolution such as the world has never seen before has taken place, or an economic change has occurred immensely more rapidly than history has ever recorded, the answer is “No!”*

A quarter of a century later the SPGB made the following telling point:

*Their great and unsolved problem has been one which arises from the condition of Russia and of its people, that the peasants – the great majority of the population – did not and do not understand or want Socialism ... (A) large majority of the town workers also were and still are lacking in an understanding of Socialism... (Every) step by the Bolshevik Party that has ignored these conditions has been brought sharply against the solid opposition of the non-socialist majority. It is in order to emphasise a very important lesson, ... that we have insisted from the first it was impossible for them to institute Socialism in Russia* (QUESTION OF THE DAY, 1942 pp 61 – 62, Socialist Party of Great Britain)

In the Preface to his pamphlet, IMPERIALISM: THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM, written in Zurich, Lenin wrote of how: “...*imperialism is the eve of the socialist revolution*” (Penguin edition p. 1) Nothing could have been further than the truth. Lenin's “*socialist*” revolution became nothing more than a capitalist revolution setting the ground for mass nationalisation, collectivisation of agriculture, gulags, dictatorship and war. Contrary to the belief of the Trotskyists, there was no damp proof course between Lenin's base and Stalin's superstructure; just a seamless construction that was to end in the political rubble of 1991.

Lenin claimed that capitalism had changed since Marx wrote CAPITAL. Industrial capital and banking capital had merged into “*Finance Capital*” while competition between capitalists had led to a monopoly of trusts and cartels. Unable to find markets within their own countries monopoly capitalists had to export capital to colonial or developing countries abroad thereby creating “*super-profits*” a part of which went to, what Lenin called, “*the aristocracy of labour*”. This, mischievously and erroneously implied that privileged workers in one part of the world were taking part in the exploitation of other workers.

Although cartels and combines were new development, they were also met by the legislative power of the capitalist state. The US government used anti-trust legislation to break the cartels while other capitalist governments used the threat of nationalisation. Lenin's “*new stage of capitalism*” was highly exaggerated as was the profit rate with the developed capitalist countries and the colonies. Competition still existed between capitalist companies while industrial capital was still largely autonomous from banking capital. Lenin also underestimated the sectional interests of the capitalist class, particular between those interests of the exporters and those of the importers. They and their

respective politicians do not represent a united capitalist class any more than the industrialists and bankers do.

And there is another deeper question to be asked of Lenin and those who came after him. If “*the export*” of capital is the hallmark of capitalism’s highest stage, what of the USSR? In a book review of Rudolf Hilferding’s *FINANCE CAPITAL: A STUDY OF THE LATEST PHASE OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT*, a writer in the *SOCIALIST STANDARD*, noted in passing a comment made of THE STATESMAN’S YEAR BOOK for 1962:

*After the Second World War the USSR has become one of the biggest creditor countries in the world. Between 1955 and January 1961 economic aid in the form of 2 per cent and 2 1/2 per cent loans has been advanced for over 520 industrial and agricultural enterprises in socialist countries* (MARKETS, MONOPOLY AND WAR, 1st July 1985).

These credit loans were continued right up until the collapse of the Soviet Union when all the accumulated debt owed had to be written off by the new regime.

As for the working class; they were exploited within “*Imperialist*” countries just as ruthlessly as they were exploited elsewhere in the world producing what Marx called “*surplus value*”. “*The aristocracy of labour*” was a convenient piece of fiction used by Lenin to split the working class along nationalist lines and was to become official Soviet policy after the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917.

## Can Art change society in a revolutionary way?

Did Lenin ever venture into the Cabaret Voltaire? The French writer Dominique Noguez imagined Lenin as a member of the Dada group in his satire; *Lénine Dada* (1989) although one of the founders of Dadaism, Hugo Ball believed Lenin must have heard their music from his house. Another member of the group, Richard Huelsenbeck recalled that Lenin did pay a visit to the Club (Helen Rappaport, *CONSPIRATOR: LENIN IN EXILE*, p.256, 2009). Yet while Dadaism looked beyond war and nationalism Lenin’s revolution would embrace both in the Great Patriotic War of June 1941.

In February 1916 Hugo Ball founded the “*Cabaret Voltaire*” where he was joined by Arp, Janco, Tzara, and later Huelsenbeck and Serner. His intentions with regard to the “*Cabaret Voltaire*” he defined in the following words:

*...It is necessary to clarify the intentions of this cabaret. It is its aim to remind the world that there are people of independent minds - beyond war and nationalism - who live for different ideals* (Why I founded the Cabaret Voltaire from the publication “*CABARET VOLTAIRE*,” Zürich, 1916)

Art might be able to highlight, question, criticise and engage with social reality but it cannot change it in a revolutionary way anymore than Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks could make reality his dreams of a socialist revolution in a backward and largely peasant strewn country like 1917 Russia. A revolutionary critique of capitalism requires politics not art; a politics which can create a bridge between what needs to be abolished and what needs to be established. In becoming just nihilistic criticism and not a socialist movement, Dadaism’s fate was to be assimilated into capitalism’s art market where even the most revolutionary and avant garde “*ism*” can be tamed and commodified.

And artistic dissent too has its limits. In the winter of 2001 a group of artists describing themselves as neo-Dadaists occupied the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich to protest against its planned closure but the occupation was quickly suppressed by the police. Under capitalism private property ownership is sacrosanct and trumps artistic freedom of expression. Now the building is a mere tourist café where the manager, fearful of infringing copyright law, is afraid to sign the glazed earthenware urinals with the signature “*R. Mutt*”!

Dadaism was an artistic revulsion against the First World War and the “*civilisation*” that underpinned it. However it was merely an expression of impotent rage against the slaughter taking place in Europe; an anarchic scream of dissent whose objects are now avariciously collect as a convenient vehicle to temporarily park their social wealth. You cannot escape war and nationalism through the sanctuary of artistic production and the art gallery. The tragic legacy of Dadaism is the endlessly shallow and safe academic works produced today by the art school establishment

exemplified in Tracy Emin's *My Bed* installation (the installation recently changed hands - but not the bed linen - for an estimated £2.5m).

There are some recent artistic installations informed by the principles of Dadaism which carry useful and telling political criticism of capitalism. The Nowhere Gallery recently exhibited an auto-destruct piece; H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. Through a glass pipette, via a plastic cone, concentrated sulphuric acid would drip hourly onto a slowly dissolving pile of metal coins contained in a large chemical resistant industrial glass bottle. The installation for the artist was a critical commentary upon the hidden social relationships ignored by economists of class relations symbolised by money and the fetishism of commodities which reduces social labour to things to be sold on the market for a profit. As Marx noted, economists are unable: "*to think of the means of production as separate from the antagonistic social mask they wear today, as a slave-owner to think that of the worker as distinct from his character as a slave*" (CAPITAL VOL. 3 p. 151). You can get more insight from art installation produced to look at capitalism, commodity production and class exploitation then you ever could from reading an academic text book on economics.

Another politically informed art installation in the spirit of Dadaism is Surplus Value recently exhibited at the Arco Art Fair by the Cuban artist Tanya Bruguera as part of her ongoing "*The Promises of Politics*" series ([http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/tania\\_bruguera](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/tania_bruguera)).

The installation *Surplus Value* is a comment on the class exploitation which takes place in any capitalist country, whether the US or Cuba. In the installation Surplus Value – a word taken from Marx's CAPITAL - she reconstructs the entrance sign to Auschwitz, originally made by a Polish prisoner of war, and interrogates its cultural and market importance to capitalist society.

The metal sign, "*Arbeit macht frei*" ("*work makes you free*"), was first adopted, ironically, in 1928 by the Weimer government led by the Social Democratic Party, as a slogan to reflect their policy of large-scale public work programmes in a fruitless attempt to end unemployment.

The sign now has a monetary value to the Polish government as a state icon with historical significance; it has a black-market price to some nefarious art collectors who were recently prepared to buy the object as stolen property; and it has an instructive lesson in the production and reproduction of surplus value as a partially completed object. Within the gallery space, an audience is asked by the artist to work on the reproduced sign with various tools which have been left on the floor along with raw materials as though making a commodity in the precise and scientifically Marxian sense of the word; that is labour power producing value and surplus value.

If Dadaism still has the ability to produce politically art useful in the critique of capitalism then same cannot be said for Lenin's dire legacy for the 21st century reflected in his pamphlet MONOPOLY CAPITALISM. When radical Islamists from developing capitalist countries violently organise against the "*Great Satan*" across the Atlantic, there in the back ground, is the dead hand of Lenin's theory of Imperialism.

The irony, though, is that where there was once the red flag with its hammer and sickle flying over the world's nationalist struggles it has now been replaced with the black flag of Jihad. In this historical "*clash of nations*" between fat and bloated bandits who want a quiet life on the one hand and lean, mean and hungry bandits on the other, the only loser has been the world's working class.

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## Markets, Monopoly and War

A new edition of Rudolf Hilferding's FINANCE CAPITAL: A STUDY OF THE LATEST PHASE OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT has been published in a new translation and with a useful introduction and notes by Tom Bottomore (Routledge and Kegan Paul, £8.95). It provides an opportunity to consider whether the theories advanced by Hilferding and others have been confirmed in the years since the work was first published in 1910

Towards the end of the 19th century there was a growing tendency towards the formation of trusts and combines associated with what came to be known as imperialism. Among the other books on the subject were J. A. Hobson's IMPERIALISM (1902) and his earlier EVOLUTION OF MODERN CAPITALISM, Lenin's IMPERIALISM: THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM and L. B. Boudin's SOCIALISM AND WAR (1916). Later on J. M. Keynes had something to say in his GENERAL THEORY (1936). Hobson held that monopolistic industries restrict output in the home market, in order to raise prices and profits, and therefore have to seek foreign outlets for investment and markets. For this purpose they get governments to colonise territories (EVOLUTION OF MODERN CAPITALISM, page 26). Lenin made use of Hobson for his own Imperialism, and gave high praise to much of his works. Keynes saw in Hobson many features of his own theories set out in his GENERAL THEORY.

Hobson, unlike Lenin but like Keynes, offered a remedy.

*"If the whole gain of improved economies passed, either to the workers in wages or to large bodies of investors in dividends, the expansion of demand in the home market would be so great as to give full employment to the productive forces of concentrated capitalism, and there would be no self-accumulating masses of profit...demanding external employment".*

Keynes (in Chapter 24) saw "*the competitive struggle for markets*" as a predominant factor in "the economic causes of war". But, said Keynes, if governments followed Keynesian policies to increase demand at home and this maintain full employment, the competitive struggle for markets as a main cause of war, would disappear.

Lenin and Hilferding gave detailed accounts of the supposedly unstoppable growth of monopoly in industry and banking but carried it much further, crediting the banks with dominating industry and the cartels with fixing prices and dividing up world markets among themselves. Lenin wrote: "*Cartels become one of the foundations of the whole economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism.*"

Some social-democrats, including Kautsky, thought that the end result would be "a single world monopoly...a universal trust", followed by socialism. Hilferding thought that this single world monopoly was "*thinkable economically, although socially and politically such a state appears unrealisable, for the antagonism of interests... would necessarily bring about its collapse*". But Hilferding (page 343) thought that world cartels would result in "*longer...periods of prosperity*" and shorter depressions. The long depression of the 1930's and the long depression since 1979 belie this.

It was Boudin in his SOCIALISM AND WAR who put in its most crude form the theory of imperialism and war. He argued (like Hobson and others) that the turning point was the replacement of such industries as textiles by iron and steel. He wrote (page 64):

*"Modern imperialism...is the expression of the economic fact that iron and steel have taken the place of textiles as the leading industry of capitalism, and imperialism means war. Textiles, therefore mean peace, iron and steel – war".*

The argument was that exports of textiles and similar consumer goods are paid for at once but iron and steel exported to build railways, factories, ports and so on are long-term investments needing the protection provided by the home government turning importing countries into colonies. Boudin's theory to explain competition for markets (page 55) was:

*"The basis of all capitalist industrial development is the fact that the working class produces not only more than it consumes, but more than society as a whole consumes".*

Therefore, said Boudin, developed countries cannot find markets inside the capitalist world but only on the fringes of capitalism, first in primitive agriculture at home and, when that too is developed, only in the countries not yet developed.

These countries themselves develop and have to seek non-existent markets for their "*surplus*" products.



It is necessary to look at what actually takes place to see that Boudin's theory is demonstrably false. The working class do not produce more than society itself consumes. Or rather, they alternately produce more than society currently consumes and then less than society currently consumes. At the onset of a depression stocks pile up of the goods some industries have overproduced for their markets but later on, as recovery begins, stocks run down again, as they did early in 1985. In 1983 British exports totalled £60,534m. According to Boudin this was all "*surplus*" to demand in the home market. Who then bought the £65,933m of imports that were sold in this country? In the same year, 77 per cent of British exports went to countries officially classified as "*developed countries*" – which Boudin said was impossible. Hilferding, Lenin and Hobson all failed to allow for the sectional divisions of interest in the capitalist class. Hilferding treated the monopolist industries as representing a united capitalist class.

Certainly the export industries have an interest in getting the government to promote exports. But most capitalists have no such interest. British exports represent under a third of total production; for America and Russia about 10 percent of total production. At their conference last year the Confederation of British Industries defeated an executive resolution calling on the government to lower the exchange rate of the pound in order to promote exports. The industries making profit by selling imports rather than pay more for home products, want the exchange rate to be higher, not lower.

At a time when the Thatcher government was declaring that they wanted the pound exchange rate not to fall but to rise, and asking Reagan to help bring it about, the FINANCIAL TIMES published an article (14 January 1985) with the title "*Industry Delighted At fall Of Pound*". It was true only of export industries not having to import raw materials, but in the article there were examples of industries having to import materials which wanted the pound rate to rise and not to fall. The British steel Corporation told the FINANCIAL TIMES that "every one cent decline in the value of sterling costs us £4 million).

The failure to recognise sectional capitalist interests applies particularly to monopoly, which raises selling prices and consequently profits for the monopolies and is viewed very differently by the rest of the capitalists, who object to being held to ransom.

But in America the method used was to control monopoly by the Anti-Trust laws, which have resulted in heavy fines and sometimes imprisonment. American Telephone and Telegraphs controllers of the near-monopoly Bell telephone system and described as the largest and richest corporation in the world, has recently fallen foul of the law and has been broken up into separate organisations, all open to competition. In Britain, the Tory government has gone over to the American system. Along with partial de-nationalisation, the Telecommunication services have lost their monopoly and been thrown open to competition. The same applies to bus services. British governments long ago halted further amalgamation of the big commercial banks that now face competition from the development of ordinary banking services by the building societies, the Trustee Savings Bank and others. How far this process will go remains to be seen, but the belief of Hilferding and Lenin that competition is dead, has been disproved.

It is equally clear that Boudin and Keynes were wrong in their belief that the competitive struggle for markets results from an inbuilt deficiency of demand in the home market. The profit motive behind the search for overseas markets by the export capitalists is no different from the profit motive behind the home producers for the home market, and the import capitalists.

What then are the causes of international conflicts of interest and war? Some, but not many, wars are fought over markets. For example the opium wars, when British traders were able to get the government to go to war to compel China to allow the import of opium. In the modern world markets take place to strategic issues. The conflict between America and European countries on the one side and Russia on the other illustrates this point. It is not Russia but Japan, America's ally which has flooded American and European markets with their cheaper products. The point was put in proper perspective by Professor Edwin Cannan in 1915:

*"Commercial interests seem to me to appear in international quarrels as a cover for strategic interests. Where they are not supposed to be divergent interests, no amount of divergent or supposedly divergent commercial interests produces either war or preparations for war"* (AN ECONOMIST'S PROTEST, page 26).

This exactly fits the relationship between America and Japan because the latter is held to be strategically so

important to America's control of the Pacific against Russia.

The most frequent cause of conflict and war is the effort of national sections of capitalism to obtain control of needed overseas sources of food and other materials and to protect transport routes. Petrol products have bulked large in this century. It has not been competition by oil producing countries to send their oil that has threatened war but the importing countries' need to have dependable supplies. Two years ago, America threatened military action if the Middle East oil producing countries organised an embargo on exports to America and Europe.

Discussing the question Engels, in a letter dated 27 October 1890, pointed out that it was the search for gold which led to the Portuguese to Africa, and it was not exports to India but imports from India which led to the conquest of India by the Portuguese, Dutch and English between 1500 and 1800: "*Nobody dreamed of exporting anything there*". Exports came later.

Lenin made a valid point in his IMPERIALISM about some annexationist wars. He wrote that sometimes the powers try to annexe regions "*not so much for their own direct advantage as to weaken an adversary and undermine its hegemony*". Lenin and Hilferding both saw the growth of monopoly and its resulting wars as a prelude to socialism, and insisted that socialism was the only answer. But Hilferding found himself acting as Finance Minister in a German coalition government, trying vainly to solve the problems of German capitalism. And Lenin's "*socialism*" has resulted in Russia becoming a capitalist super-power. Lenin saw "*the export of capital*" as the hallmark of capitalism's highest stage. It is interesting to note the role now played by Russia. THE STATESMAN'S YEAR BOOK, 1962 had this to say:

*"After the Second World War the USSR has become one of the biggest creditor countries in the world. Between 1955 and January 1961 economic aid in the form of 2 per cent and 2 1/2 per cent loans, has been advanced for over 520 industrial and agricultural enterprises in socialist countries"*.

This foreign loan policy has continued since 1961

"H" (SOCIALIST STANDARD 1st July 1985). "H" was the pen name of Edgar Hardcastle who, along with other sound socialists, was expelled from the Socialist Party in May 1991 for carrying out propaganda in the full name of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

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# **What We Said and When Nationalism and Workers Control Socialist Party of Great Britain February 1988**

## **WHAT WE SAID**

*It is clever propaganda, but the realities of the class struggle between those who own and do not produce, and those who produce but do not own, will not be for long be smoothed over by even the most plausible Labour-Communist orator. The working class, faced with the same old ruthlessness of capitalist employers,, of government departments and the Boards of the Mining and Transport undertakings when "nationalisation" takes place, will find that they have no defence except the limited defence provided by their own trade unions.* SOCIALIST STANDARD, October 1945.

*The task of socialists has also been made more difficult by the association in many peoples' minds of nationalisation*

*with socialism. Nationalised or state capitalist industry is in fact just another way of operating capitalism which leaves unchanged the exploited and subject position of the workers. In Britain, it is the Labour Party which has mainly been responsible for this confusion.* Pamphlet, QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, September 1969.

*Many workers appear to believe that co-operative societies are a form of socialism, or at least a step towards the establishment of socialism. The co-ops buy and sell at a profit. Otherwise they would very soon cease to exist. This profit is derived from the unpaid portion of the labour of some section of the workers. It is immaterial whether those workers are directly employed in production by the co-ops themselves or by the outside concerns who produce goods in which co-ops deal. The fact that some of this profit is distributed in the form of the “divi” among working class consumers and members, blinds the latter to the real position.* SOCIALIST STANDARD, August 1928.

## WHAT THEY SAID

*Victory in the fight against class domination can only be achieved by the direct action of the workers themselves. The Syndicalist Workers Federation rejects all parliamentary and similar activity as deflecting the workers from the class struggle into paths of class collaboration.* Syndicalist Workers Federation. AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

*We know that given the right men and the right atmosphere, together with public goodwill and organisation, we can inspire this great national industry in terms of abundance and true economy. That is our mandate and our intention.* Emmanuel Shinwell, Minister of Fuel and power in Labour Government, 1945, Debate on Mining Industry (Hansard, 29th January 1946).

*The Soviets or Council are class organisations, characteristic of the proletarian revolution. They are mass organisations of the proletariat, the dynamic expression of the proletariat in action. A workmen’s Soviet bases itself directly upon the workers in the factories; the working class is its constituency* THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION IN GERMANY by L. C. Fraina.

*We do not believe that there is any fundamental difference so long as the wages system exists between the relationship of a private employer to his workers, and the relationship of a municipality or State to its workers. In each case, the latter sell their labour – power and their capacity to sell it at a fair price depends on their capacity through their Trade Unions to refuse to work* DAILY HERALD, 12th April, 1924.

MARX – THE VIRILE GHOST, E. HARDY, LECTURE 1990

Following acute economic difficulties in Russia and East European countries, and the consequent replacement of their dictatorships, the media in this country tell us that this is the death of Marxism, and in Russia, official spokesmen blame Marx for what went wrong with the economy.

The S.P.G.B acknowledges its debt to Karl Marx for his analysis of capitalism and is not disturbed by these stories. What has been going on in Russia since 1917 and in the East European countries has nothing to do with Socialism and Marxism. Their economies have been operating State capitalism. There are not and never have been any socialist nations.

This is not the first “*death of Marxism*”. Many observers were confident that the generally hostile reception of Marx’s CAPITAL VOLUME 1. At its publication had strangled the infant at birth. It survived however only to be slaughtered again when the economist J. M. Keynes came to universal popularity with his promise of full employment and no more depressions. Keynes himself described Marx’s Capital as an “*obsolete economic textbook which I know to be not only scientifically erroneous but without interest or application for the modern world*”. The reason why Marx’s economic works have survived all the attacks on them, in many important respects, capitalism has continued to behave in the way Marx described and that his opponents denied. One of these is the recurrent crises and depressions which Marx showed to be inherent in the structure of capitalism.

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# Marx and the Machinery of Government

## Introduction

Marx always insisted that the working class must get control of the State machine.

He wrote:

*“...the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy* (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, 1848 p. 29 SPGB edition).

This is because Marx explicitly stated that the class struggle was in fact a political struggle. The means of production and class exploitation are protected by the capitalist state, *“the Executive of the bourgeoisie”* (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO)

He also wrote:

*“Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one”. It is itself an economic power.* (CAPITAL VOL. 1 Ch. 31 Kerr edition p. 823).

This is frequently distorted to mean that the workers should fight against the State power by armed force. This is a complete reversal of what Marx wrote. He was showing how the capitalists destroyed feudalism and hastened the development of capitalism.

Marx named the different kinds of force used by the capitalists to do this, namely; brute force in the colonies, the national debt, the modern method of taxation, and the protectionist system.

Control of the State power was therefore:

*“those methods...all employing the power of the state, the centralised and organised force of society”*( loc cit).

## Civil War in France

For 70 years or more critics of the Socialist Party of Great Britain have been misquoting from Marx’s “CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE” pretending that Marx said that the workers must not get control of the machinery of government, or need not do so.

Marx was writing about the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Socialist critics thought that Marx drew from the Commune the lesson that the workers need not get control of the State machine, but must *“smash it”*.

On the contrary, Marx wrote that the Paris workers rightly got control of the State machine. Quoting from the Central Committee’s MANIFESTO:

*“...They have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power”* (p. 50 Moscow ed. 1977)

But Marx added the words:

*“But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their own purposes”* (page 50).

The Socialist critics - usually supporters of Lenin and Trotsky- conveniently remove or ignore the word *“simply”*

There is all the difference in the world between saying that the workers cannot get hold of the State machinery and saying that they cannot **simply** get hold. Marx said and illustrated it with detail.

What the workers had to do was first to get governmental power and then remove its purely coercive features, but retain its legitimate functions.

The point is that in fact all state machinery is both coercive and administrative; it is an exercise of ruling class force, but also the medium for carrying on necessary administrative functions.

As an example we can consider the Home Office (now split into two independent sections) which controlled Police and prisons but also operated health and Safety regulations in factories.

So in CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE Marx wrote:

*“The few but important functions which still would remain for a central government, (that is, after lopping off its class coercive exercises), “were not to be suppressed, as has been intentionally mis-stated, but were to be discharged by Communal, and therefore strictly responsible agents” (page 55).*

And he continued:

*“While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society (p. 55).*

This statement by Marx should be compared to Clause 6 of the SPGB’s OBJECT AND DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES where the Party states:

*“the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that the machinery including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic”.*

## **The SPGB and the Machinery of Government**

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has always insisted on the necessity for the workers to gain control of the machinery of government before attempting to establish socialism.

There has never been a parliamentary test of the power of socialist delegates acting on instructions given to them by socialists. And here we are talking about a majority of socialists who understand and agree with the case for socialism.

In Britain, Parliament has a complete and secure control upon the armed forces. The use of troops to break the last fireman strike demonstrates whose side the State takes in industrial disputes.

The use of the machinery of government against workers by Tory and Labour governments demonstrates the necessity for workers to gain control of Parliament before establishing Socialism. And this can only be achieved through a socialist majority sending socialist delegates to Parliament.

The attitude of the Socialist Party of Great Britain on the need to gain control of the political machinery has been logical and consistent. The SPGB holds the same view as Marx as to the necessity of the workers gaining control of the machinery of government before they can establish socialism. And in countries like Britain the vote will give them that control.

One final point. The one way to prevent capitalists from using political power against workers is to stop voting for

their politicians and political parties at elections. The SPGB has always urged workers not to vote for any candidate who is a supporter of capitalism “*whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist...*” (Clause 8 Declaration of Principles)

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# Correspondence

*As a student I have the following questions and would be more than happy if you kindly help me by answering them:*

- 1. Was it a mistake of Marx to appreciate annexation of some parts of Mexico to America?*
- 2. Despite its class nature, why “democracy” cannot be regarded by Marxists as an ideology?*
- 3. What were the economic and political reasons of the Holocaust?*
- 4. Is it correct to claim that US has been defeated in Iraq and Afghanistan while it did succeed to install its puppets in both countries?*
- 5. Does the concept of CHANGE will also change from a Marxist point of view?*

*Hope you get an opportunity to reply as early as possible.*

*In solidarity,*

*B*

## Reply

Thank you for your questions. Our reply to the points you raised are as follows:

1. Engels supported the Irish fight for independence. Easy enough today with hindsight to say this or that was a mistake.

We think Marx would have thought the US’s annexation of parts of Mexico represented a form of progress/development and so would be likely to help develop a working class movement for socialism, rather than have Mexico and similar countries stay in a peasant backward situation (see The 18TH BRUMAIRE of Louis Bonaparte published in 1852 for Marx’s views on the peasants as essentially conservative in their thinking and outlook, hog-tied by Roman Catholic religion and priests/superstition).

One of Marx’s socialist friends – Joseph Weidemeyer – went to the USA and became a Colonel in the Civil War, and later a Congressman. He would probably have seen the North as a progressive cause, fighting against plantation slavery. Likewise, Charles Dana – editor of the New York paper, who published so many good articles by Marx – must also have been ‘*progressive*’ in his politics. So much so that his paper lost subscribers and went bust during the Civil War.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain has again and again urged workers not to get involved in capitalism’s wars. To quote Shakespeare: “*A plague on both your houses!*” (ROMEO AND JULIET).

The working class have never had their interests at stake in a capitalist war. Wars today are all too often about the control of oilfields and other key economic resources, trade routes and gas and oil pipelines, also markets. But when a war ends, it is never the workers who end up owning the oil fields or controlling the markets and so on. Why should workers risk life and limb by getting involved in their bosses’ interests? Let the bosses fight these wars themselves!

2. The term ‘*democracy*’ is often used in an ideological/propagandist sense – for example by the BBC and other mass media, likewise by politicians of the UK/US and so on. But democracy means a lot more. We hold that



democracy is a practice – something which has to be done, put into effect, and this means a lot more than what capitalist politicians and politics can offer. In UK politics, we get a chance to vote for MPs only once in every few years – and then they have a blank cheque, and can chop and change policies, regardless of any manifesto pledges (for example, the Lib Dem manifesto pledge regarding student loans/debt, Cameron promising to be the “*greenest government ever*”, the claim of the unelected Coalition to be democratically elected, and similar claims of many previous governments elected on minority votes, and so on...)

We hold that socialists would only accept election as delegates, not as representatives. A delegation of socialists would be mandated with one aim only: to do all they could to achieve an end to capitalism and class exploitation in order to bring about a Socialist social system.

Our correspondent should recognize that there’s a world of difference between this as a policy/practice, based on principle, and the use of the term ‘*democracy*’ as an ideological and propagandist fig-leaf, based on half-truths and expediency, to cover up and disguise the sordid and brutal realities of capitalist wars and class conflict.

3. The ideology behind the Holocaust of the 1930s and 1940s was one which went back to anti-Semitism in the late 19th century. There was anti-Semitism and anti-Jew pogroms in Britain back in the Middle Ages (for example York). This goes back to the Christian ban on usury: result being that to borrow money to fund wars, the King would borrow from Jewish money-lenders, who were not banned from lending as Christians were. From the Middle Ages onwards, Jewish families developed international banking.

Creditors resent being in debt, especially since those they are indebted to hold a certain power over them. So anti-Semitism developed down the centuries, until in the 19th and 20th centuries a specific anti-Semitic propaganda and ideology was being promoted both in Germany and France. In Britain and other countries like the US eugenics was an accepted view through which anti-Semitism was expressed. One Party stood out against racism and that was the Socialist Party of Great Britain, who, at its formation in 1904, had as its fourth principle the statement that “...*the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex*”.

Even in the 1940s, during WWII, the British government refused to publicise what facts it knew about Hitler’s treatment of Jews since it was thought unlikely to encourage the British to support the war effort. After the war, when many Jews wanted to get out of Europe and set up a homeland in Palestine, the British government did its best to prevent them. In Vichy France, the government collaborated with Hitler’s Holocaust, again because of the ancient anti-Semitism prevalent throughout the Christian Europe. The term ‘*pogrom*’ related to the practice of raiding, looting and expulsion of Jews from their villages by Russians and Cossacks, especially in the Ukraine and Poland.

There are certain obvious *economic* advantages in seizing the assets of merchants and bankers that you are in debt to.

4. The fact is that the US government has decided to withdraw its military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. That normally means a defeat – cloaked by the ideological claim that this is being done to leave each country free and independent.

However the corrupt puppet regimes left in charge have very little support or legitimacy in these countries, and currently Iraq being torn apart by sectarian factions, while in Afghanistan the Taleban are again able to impose their reactionary religious dogma, banning women from public life, and imposing savage sharia law penalties. In spite of these setbacks, the US is now supporting so-called freedom-fighters in Syria, and again this policy is resulting in a sectarian civil war.

Meanwhile the Israel/ Palestine conflict continues – and this perceived injustice is what motivated so many Muslims to see the US as the enemy of Islam and recruited so many to join the anti-Assad forces in Syria who then went on to establish a Caliphate in Syria/Iraq.

Incidentally, capitalism is a system with never-ending wars: while there are occasional truces and cease-fires, the system is one with conflict as a part of its DNA. Even if all armed conflicts ceased, there would still be the class struggle between employers and their employees, not to mention the never-ending competition – conflict in all but name - between companies and between different sectors of the economy, and of course between the competing

countries for dominance in world markets.

5. Your point about “*change*” is rather vague. What sort of ‘*change*’ is referred to? Are we talking of a revolutionary change in the political and economic system, one which would lead to a fundamental change in the social system? If it is, then this is the sort of change that the socialist is concerned to bring about.

But while capitalism lasts, while there may be many minor changes, fundamentally the system remains much the same. Many workers remain ill- housed – or lacking in the means to enable them to buy or rent the houses or flats that they themselves build, lacking the dosh to buy food, to clothe their kids etc. Other workers are encouraged to see themselves as superior i.e. ‘middle class’ with a better standard of living, education, earnings, foreign travel etc.

These are still members of the **working class** – albeit with golden chains, not iron ones. But they too can be made redundant at the drop of a hat, often simply by email or a text message on their mobile phones.

When this happens, they only have funds to support themselves and their dependants for a matter of a few weeks or a month or two before, like other unemployed people they too have to turn to pay-day lenders and food banks for help.

Capitalism remains a system which lurches from boom to bust, just as it did throughout the 20th century and even in the 19th century this was a feature which Marx was able to analyse in CAPITAL. His analysis remains the key to understanding the matter of capitalist crises. Importantly he noted that all crises are the result of a plethora – an overproduction of commodities, at least in relation to what the market can take, although not in relation to workers’ needs.

Capitalism may be constantly in flux, constantly changing in different phases of its economic cycles, and with different countries dominant, politically, economically, and militarily. But the capitalist class system continues much the same, generation after generation, with relatively minor differences.

As for the abstract “*concept of change*”: the question seems to be rather one of a philosophical/linguistic nature. Our concern is to bring about the necessary social, economic and political – and practical – changes necessary to end capitalism and its class exploitation, and bring about Socialism.

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# Object and Declaration of Principles

## Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

## Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those

who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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email: [enquiries@socialiststudies.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@socialiststudies.org.uk) | [www.socialiststudies.org.uk](http://www.socialiststudies.org.uk)